User Guide for Preparing Regional Conservation Partner Program Fiscal Year 2018 Pre-Proposal Application

Contents

Introduction and Quick Tips

Welcome to the user guide for preparing a pre-proposal application for the Fiscal Year 2018 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

This user guide includes step-by-steps with screen shots for submitting your application including an orientation and tab-by-tab guide for the data entry tool, uploading the project area map jpeg, and completing and uploading the fillable PDF for the narrative elements required in the Announcement for Program Funding.

Here are some quick tips to get you started:

- **Prepare before Starting the Tool**: Refer to the RCPP FY2018 Announcement for Program Funding (APF) for application information and program guidance. Read through the User Guide to see the information and documents needed to submit the complete application. Work with your partners, including the relevant NRCS State Office, to gather all the necessary information before beginning the data entry tool. Devote some time on your calendar, as it is recommended to complete the tool in one sitting to ensure the information you provide is consistent.

- **Open Other Spreadsheets After Beginning:** If you have other excel spreadsheets open, opening the RCPP Preproposal tool will close them. Wait to open any spreadsheets necessary to fill out the data until the tool is running.

- **Write Executive Summary Outside the Tool:** If you are manually typing in your executive summary and exceed 300 words, pressing the "confirm" button will clear the text in the box. Write your executive summary in another program, then paste (Control + V) the text into the executive summary box.

- **Click Add Partner/Line for Last Entry for Project Partners/Financials Tabs:** Make sure you click "Add Partner" for the last partner on the Project Partners tab and "Add Line" for the last line of data on the Project Financials tab. If you do not, the tool will not include the contribution or request for that last entry.

- **Ensure to click the "Confirm" Button:** If a tab is complete with information, but does not show green on the indicators at the bottom, ensure you have clicked the "confirm" button for the tab. Once you have successfully confirmed each tab, you will be able to send the information to the RCPP team.

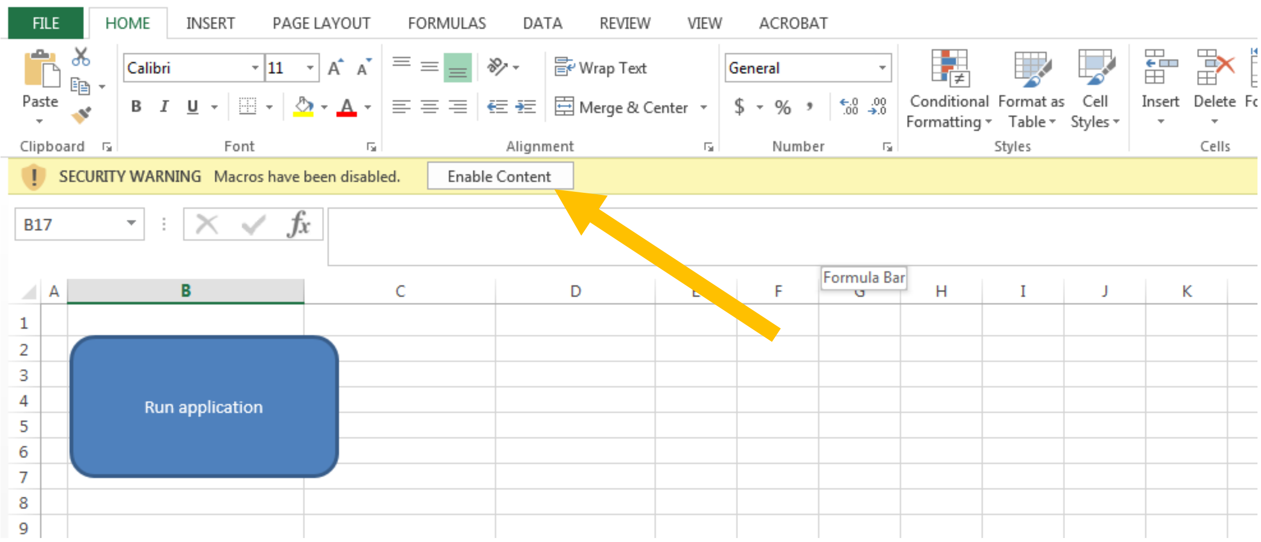
- **NRCS is Here to Help:** If you have any questions, contact the National Headquarters RCPP team at: RCPP@wdc.usda.gov. Or you can contact your states' NRCS State Office, whose contact information is listed at the end of the Fiscal Year 2018 Announcement for Program Funding. If you encounter issues during application submission, please take screen shots and be as specific possible in describing the issue. This will help the team trouble-shoot the issue.

Thanks for your interest in forming diverse partnerships that leverage contributions to bring innovative solutions for on-the-ground conservation. We at NRCS look forward to working with you.

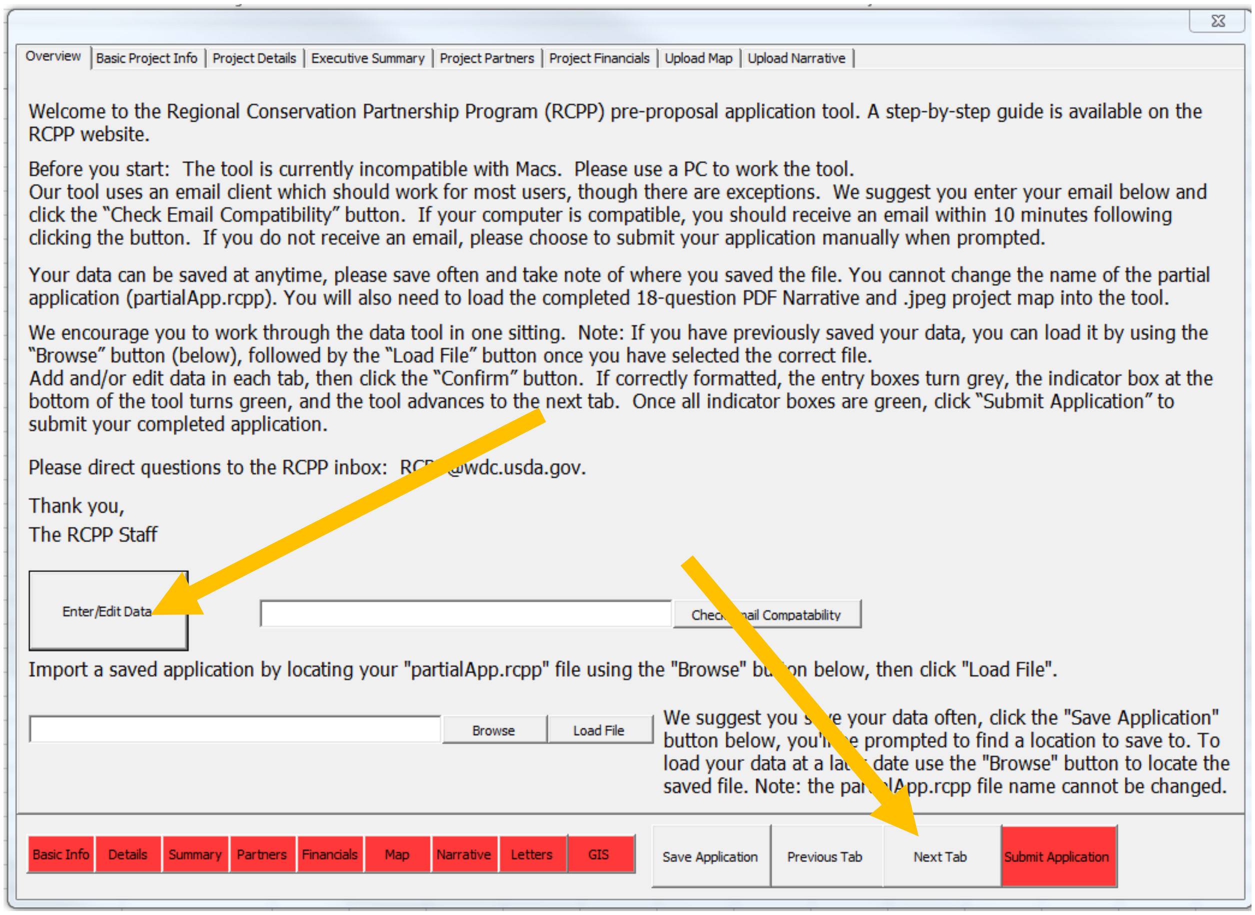
Beginning the Tool

When you open the excel spreadsheet for the first time, you may need to enable macros or editing.

To enable macros, click the “Enable Content” button located in the top middle of the Excel window, indicated by the orange arrow.



After you enable content, you will see the following welcome screen. To begin, click either "Start Entering Data" or the "Next Tab" buttons, indicated with the orange arrow.



Orientation to the Tool

Navigation

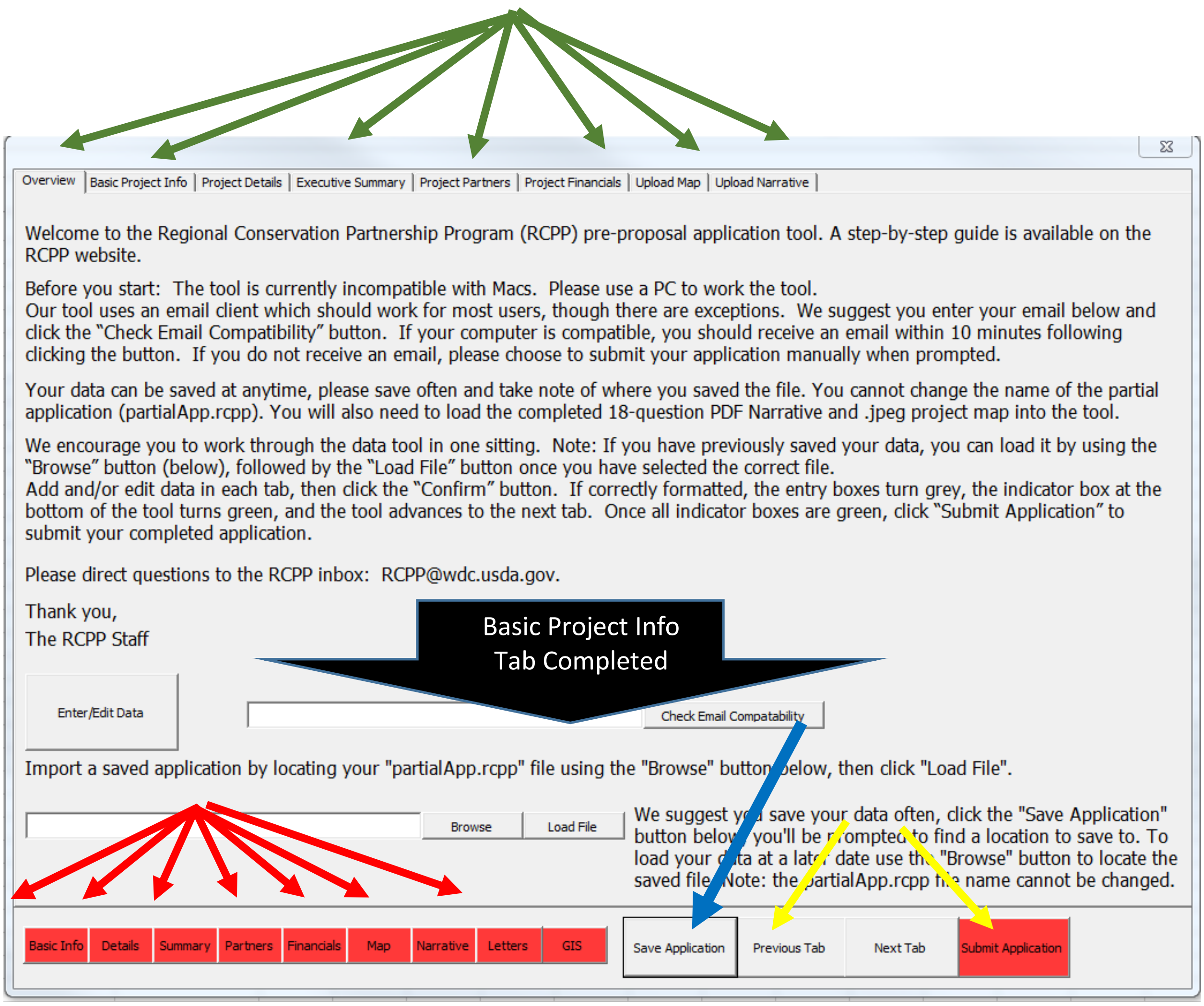
You can navigate through the various parts of the application by:

1. Clicking on the tab at the top of the application tool (green arrows) or
2. Clicking the “Previous Tab” and “Next Tab” buttons at the bottom of the application tool (yellow arrows).

Progress Indicator

The bottom left of the tool indicates your progress in completing the application. Each box on the bottom left relates to a tab of information.

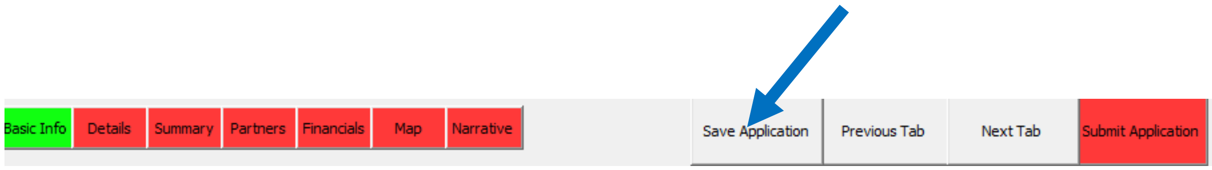
- When the tab is incomplete, the box is red colored (red arrows).
- When the tab is complete, the box turns green (purple arrow).
- When all the tabs are complete, the “Submit Application” button on the bottom right will turn green and become active.



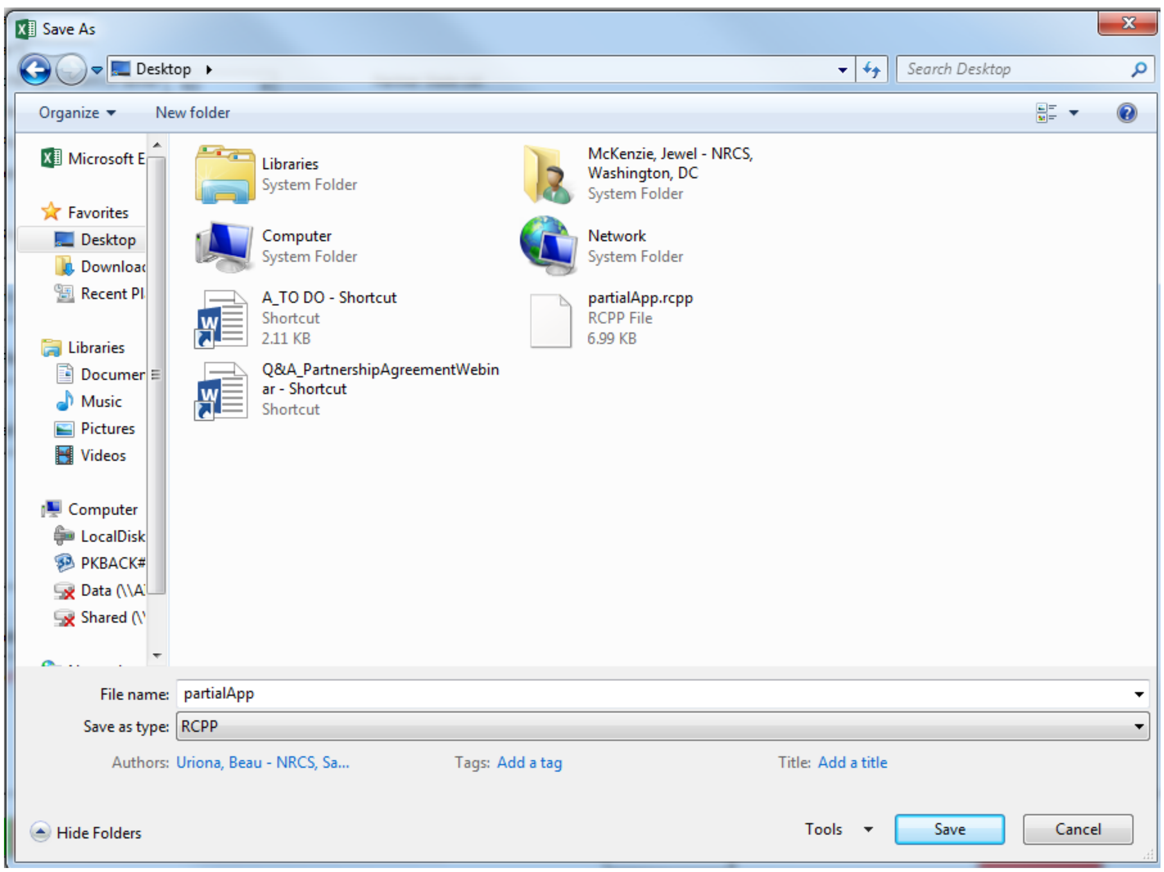
Saving Before Completion

You can save a partially completed application.

1. Click on the “Save Application” button at the bottom center of the application tool (blue arrow)

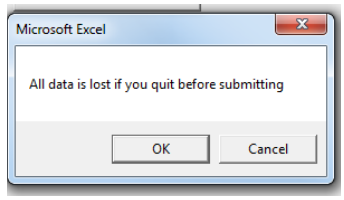


“Save application” will generate the following window:

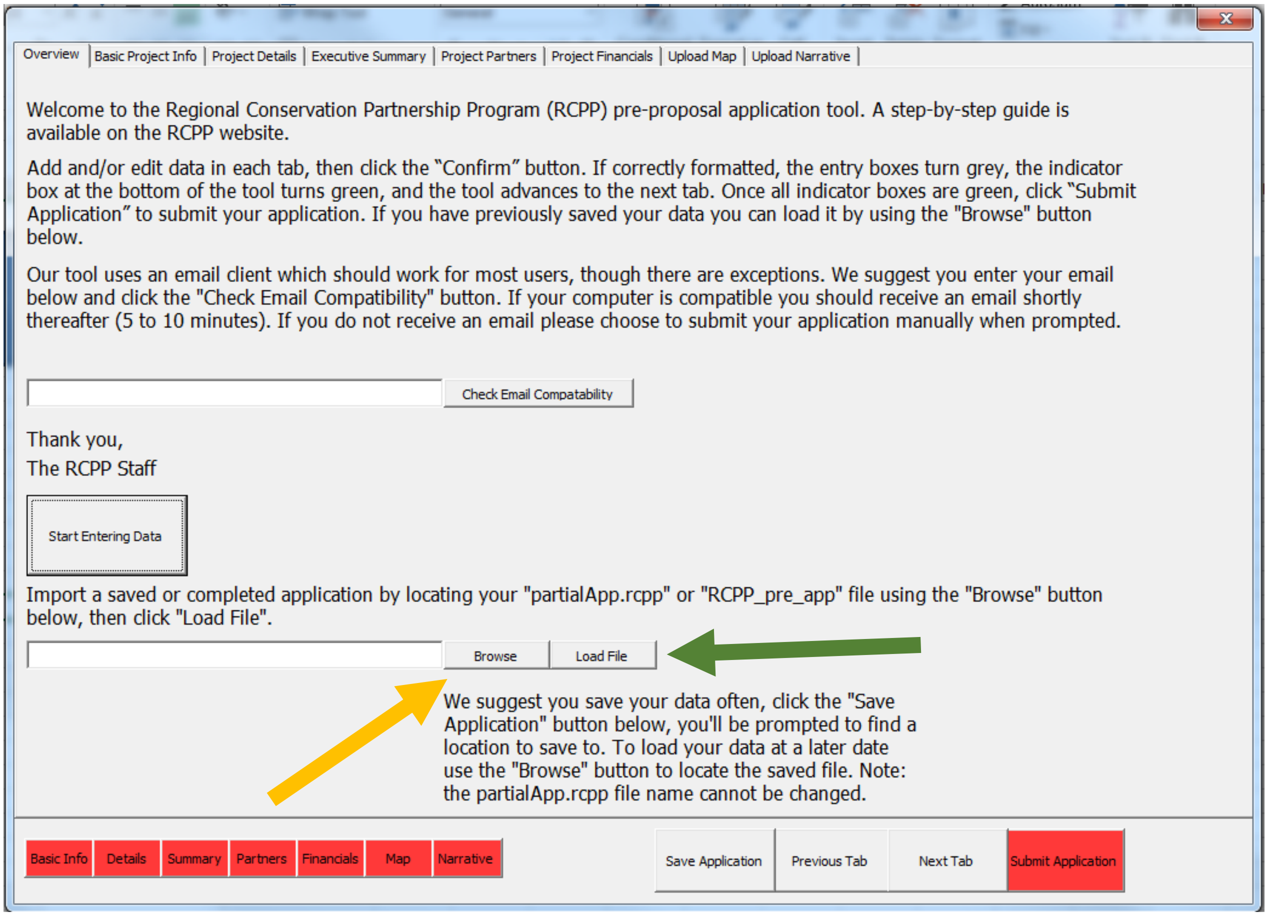


2. Navigate to the location you want to save the file.
3. Fill in a name in the “File Name” line at the bottom of the newly opened window or leave the default “partialApp.”
4. Press the “Save” button.
5. Close the tool.

NOTE: If you have saved the partial application, you can ignore this error message that opens when you close the tool:



Reopening a saved partially completed application



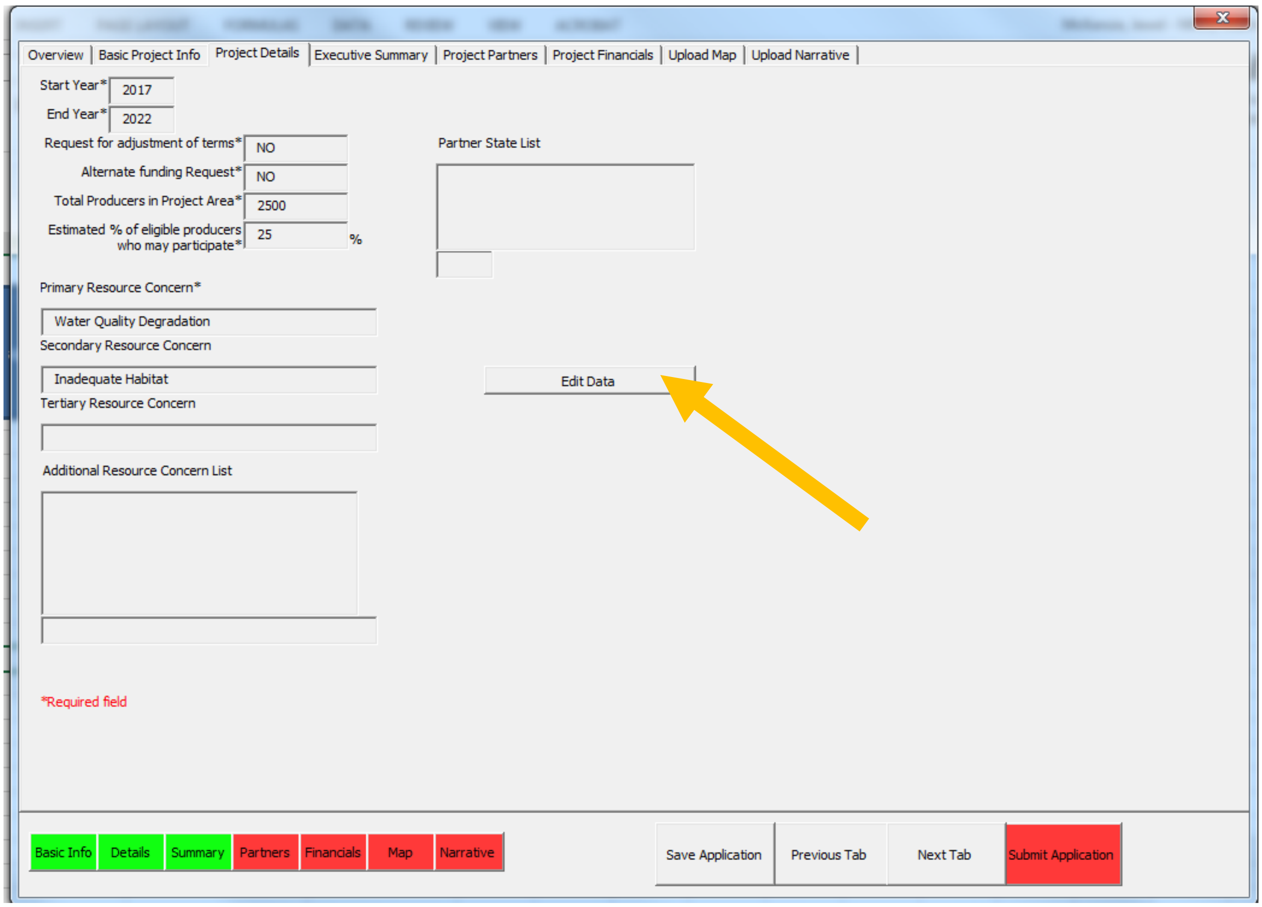
1. Open the pre-proposal tool.
2. Click on the "Browse" button in the "Overview" tab (indicated with the yellow arrow).
3. Navigate to the location you saved the partially completed application file.
4. Click on the partially completed application file. The file name will appear in the "File Name" line at the bottom of the window.
5. Click on the "Save" button.
6. The tool will enter the file pathway into the box to the left of the "Browse" button.
7. Click on the "Load File" button (indicated with the green arrow).
8. The tool will reload the information you saved.

NOTE: You cannot click on the file to open the saved partial application. You must open the data tool, and load it through the pre-proposal tool.

Editing data entered after pressing "Confirm" button on a tab

After you press the "Confirm" button on a tab, the data entry boxes will be locked, indicated with a grey color. To change the data entered follow these steps.

1. Navigate to the tab (along the top of the tool) with the data you want to revise.
2. Click on the "Edit Data" button (indicated with the yellow arrow). For the Upload Map and Upload Narrative tabs, click on the "Change File" button instead of the "Edit Data" button.

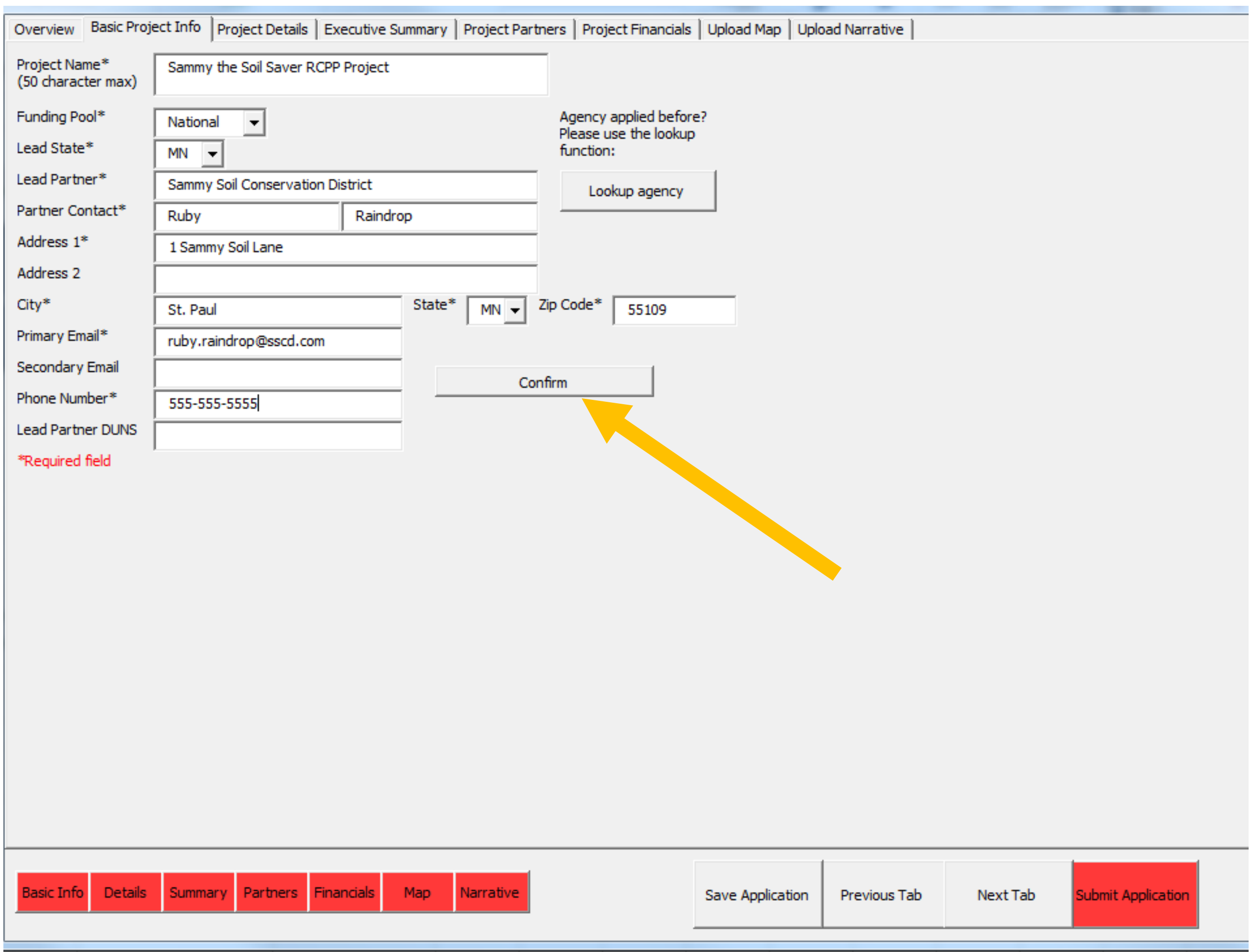


3. When you click on "Edit Data", the data entry boxes will turn white.
4. Revise the necessary data entry fields.
5. Click "Confirm" button again to relock the data and complete the tab.

Guidance for Each Tab

Basic Project Info Tab

Use this tab to provide information on the project name, funding pool, lead state and partner, and contact information.



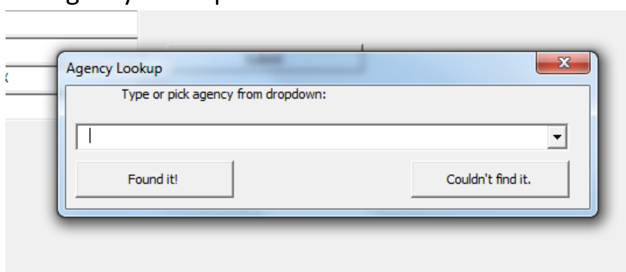
1. *Project Name* – Provide a name for the project. The tool limits the title to 50 characters.

2. *Funding Pool* – Drop down menu providing three options:
   a. National
   b. State
   c. CCA (Critical Conservation Area) – if you select the CCA option, another drop down menu appears that provides eight options

i. Great Lakes Region
ii. Chesapeake Bay Watershed
iii. Mississippi River Basin
iv. Longleaf Pine Range
v. Columbia River Basin
vi. California Bay Delta
vii. Prairie Grasslands Region
viii. Colorado River Basin

3. *Lead State* – Identify the lead state for NRCS for the project

4. *Lead Partner* – Identify the lead partner
   a. If the lead partner applied for RCPP in a previous year, click the "Lookup Agency" button. The tool will open the "Agency Lookup" window.



   b. Scroll through the drop down menu looking for the name of the lead partner organization
   c. If you find the name, select it and click "Found it!"
   d. If you could not find it, select "Couldn't find it."

5. *Partner Contact* – List the first name of a contact for the Lead Partner in the first box on this line and the last name of the contact in the second box on this line.

6. *Address 1* – Identify the address for the lead partner organization

7. *Address 2* – If needed, include a second line for the lead partner organization

8. *City, State, Zip Code* - Identify the city, select the state from the drop down menu, and identify the zip code for the lead partner organization

9. *Primary Email* – Identify an email address for the lead partner contact

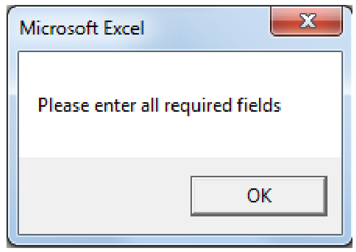
10. *Secondary Email* – If needed, identify a second email address to contact the lead partner organization

11. *Phone Number* – Identify the phone number for the lead partner contact

12. *Lead Partner DUNS* – Identify the Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number for the lead partner organization. This is required for the full proposal stage of the

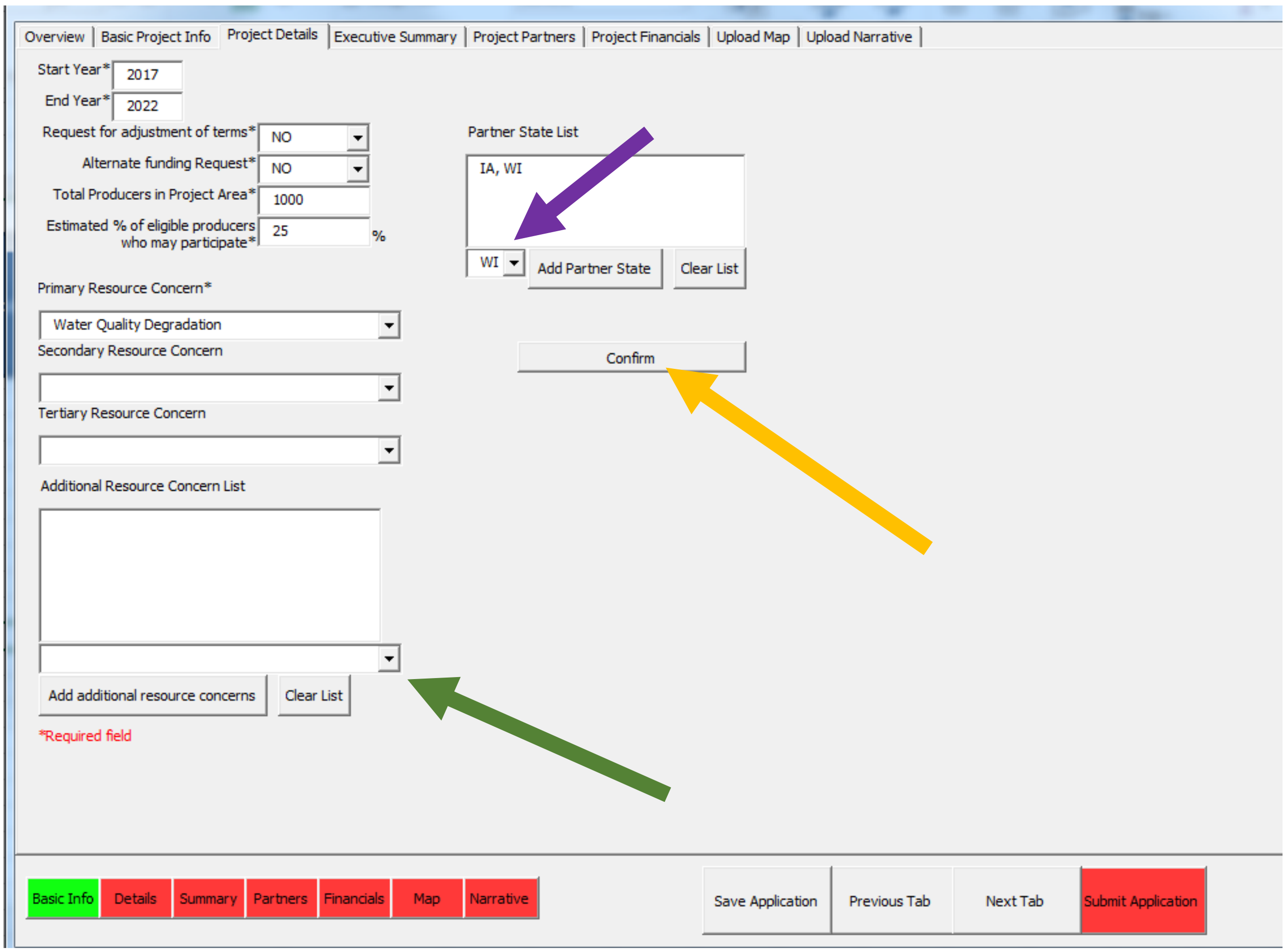
application. See the Announcement for Program Funding for more information about obtaining a DUNS number.

13. *Click the Confirm button* (indicated with the orange arrow) –
    a. If you have completed all the required fields, the tool will advance to the next tab "Project Details."
    b. If you have not completed all the required components, the tool will generate an error message (below) indicating the field to fix or complete:



Project Details Tab

Use this tab to provide information on the project timeline, requests for adjustment of terms and alternate funding, information on producers likely to be involved, and resource concerns addressed.



1. *Start Year* – Identify the start year for the agreement. The application tool requires the start year to be between 2018 and 2023.

2. *End Year* – Identify the end year for the agreement. The application tool requires the end year to be between 2018 and 2023. The tool requires the end year to be greater than the start year.

3. *Request for adjustment of terms* – Identify whether the agreement includes a request to adjust the rules of the covered program. See the Announcement for Program Funding for more detail on adjustment of covered program terms.

4. *Alternate funding request* – Identify whether the agreement includes a request for alternate funding arrangements with a multi-state water resource agency or authority. See the

Announcement for Program Funding for more information on alternate funding arrangements.

5. *Total Producers in Project Area* – Identify the number of agricultural producers in the area covered under the agreement. See the Announcement for Program Funding for the definition of a producer and more detail on defining the project area.

6. *Estimated % of Eligible producers who may participate* – Identify the percentage of eligible producers who may participate. See the Announcement for Program Funding for more detail on eligible producers.

7. *Primary Resource Concern* – Select the primary resource concern that the agreement will address from the drop-down list. Options are limited to those identified as priority for the Critical Conservation Area or at the national level.

8. *Secondary Resource Concern* – If applicable, select the secondary resource concern that the agreement will address from the drop-down list. Options are limited to those identified as priority for the Critical Conservation Area or at the national level.

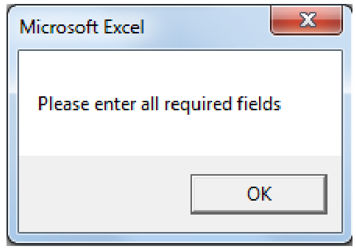
9. *Tertiary Resource Concern* – If applicable, select the tertiary resource concern that the agreement will address from the drop-down list. Options are limited to those identified as priority for the Critical Conservation Area or at the national level.

10. *Partner State List* – If applicable, select a state other than the lead state that is included in the agreement area from the drop down menu, indicated with the purple arrow. Once selected, click the "Add Partner State" and the state will be added to the Partner State List box above. If you enter an incorrect state, click the "Clear List" button, which will clear the Partner State List box.

11. *Additional Resource Concern List* – If applicable, select additional resource concerns that the agreement will address from the drop-down list, indicated with the green arrow. Options are limited to those identified as priority for the Critical Conservation Area or at the national level. Once selected, click the "Add Additional Resource Concerns" button and the resource concern will be added to the Additional Resource Concern List box above. If you enter an incorrect resource concern, click the "Clear List" button, which will clear the Additional Resource Concern List box.

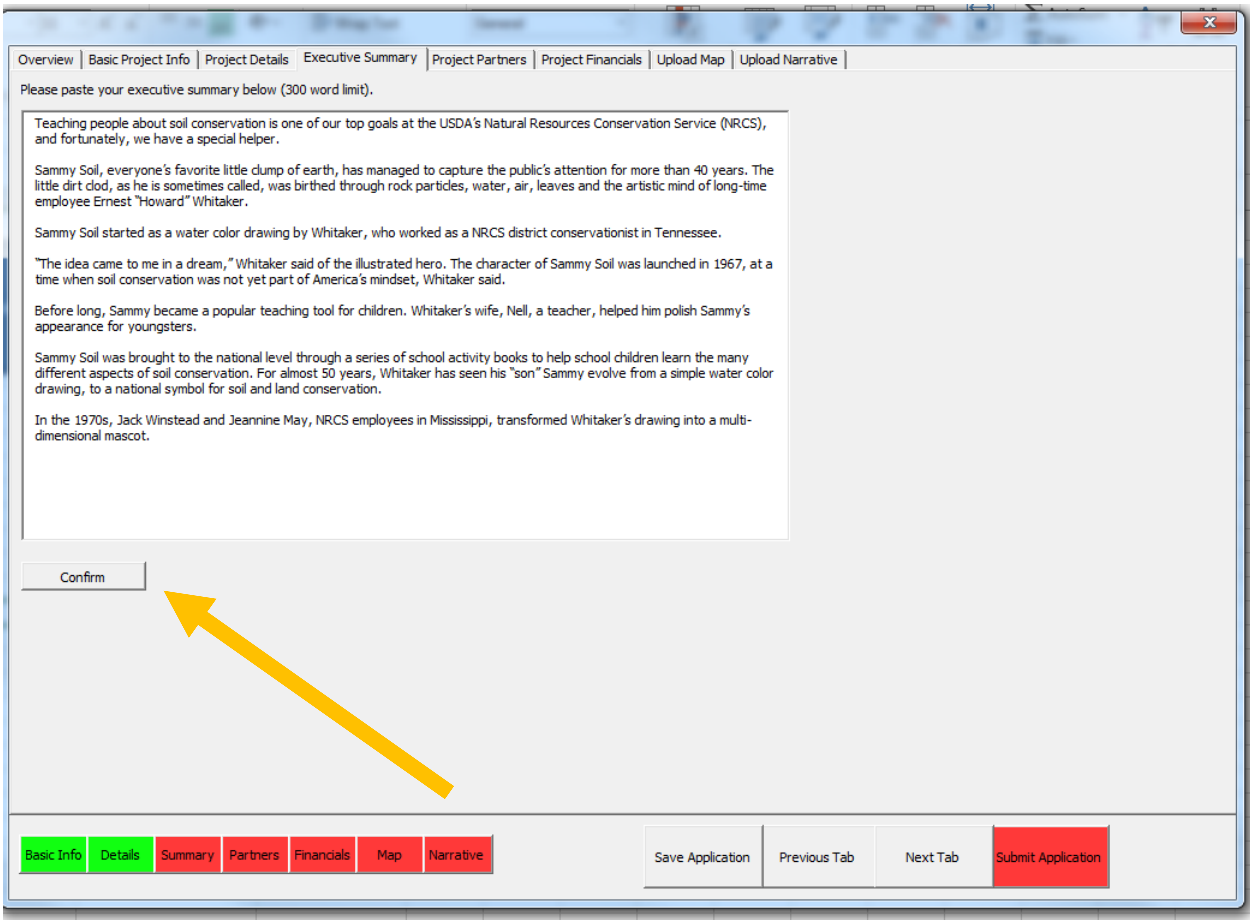
12. *Click the Confirm button* (indicated with the orange arrow) –
    a. If you have completed all the required fields, the tool will advance to the next tab "Executive Summary"

b. If you have not completed all the required components, the tool will generate this error:



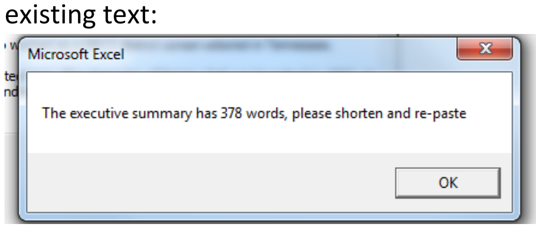
Executive Summary Tab

Use this tab to enter an executive summary of the project.



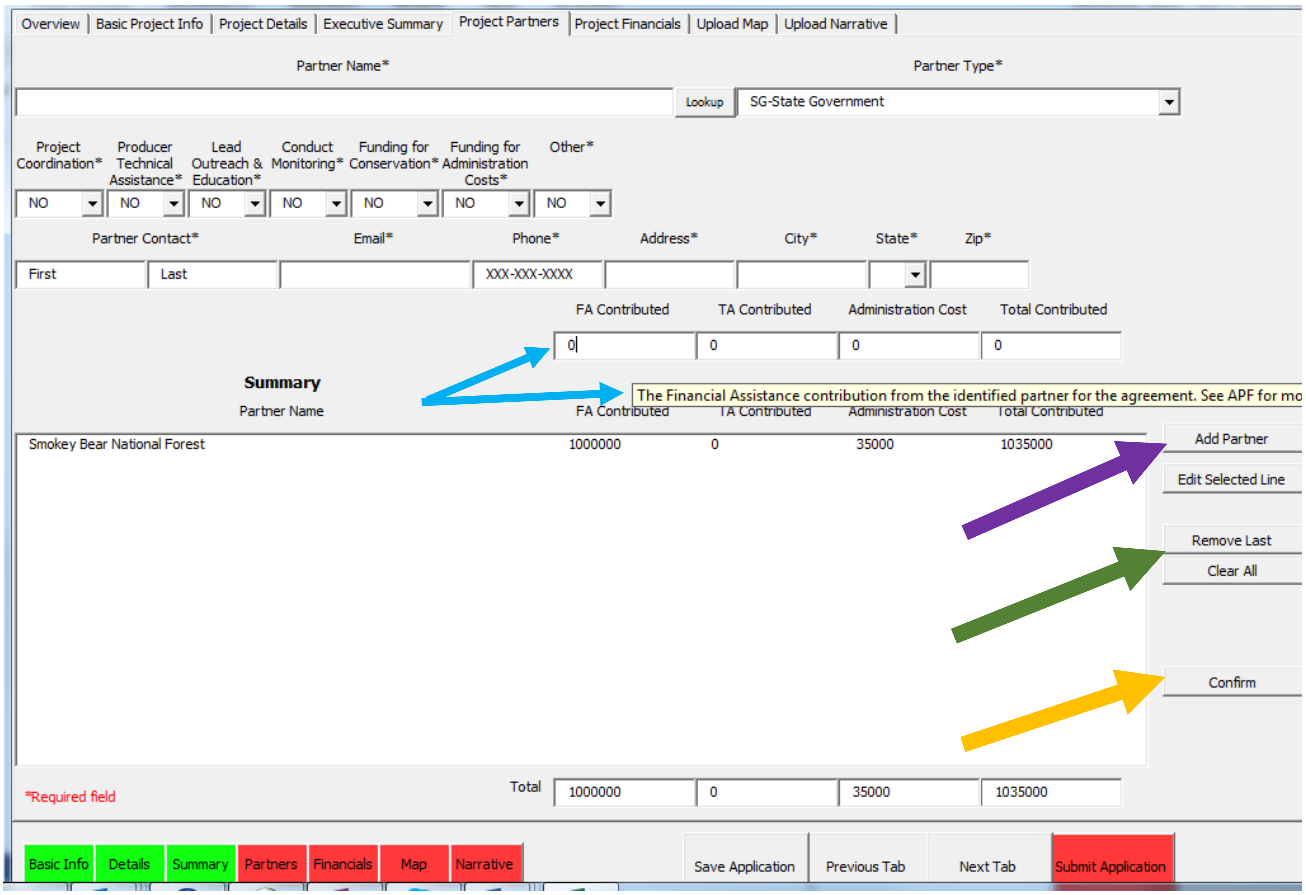
You can copy and paste up to 300 words describing the project into this box.

1. Copy your original text.
2. Click in the box in the tool to place the cursor in the box.
3. Hold the "Ctrl" button and press the letter "v" to paste the text into the box.
4. Click the Confirm button (indicated with the orange arrow) –
    a. If you have completed all the required fields, the tool will advance to the next tab.
    b. If you have exceeded 300 words, the tool will generate this error and clear the existing text:



Project Partners

Use this tab to provide information on each partner's contact information and contribution as well as their type of contribution.



This screen is split into two components.

The top portion is used for entering data about each partner, while the bottom portion summarizes the data entered. You cannot change the numbers in the summary. You must delete the incorrect information using "Remove Last" (indicated by the green arrow) or "Clear All", then enter the correct information.

For the top portion:

1. *Partner Name* – Begin by entering the name of a partner contributing financial assistance, technical assistance, or administration costs.

2. *Partner Type* – Select the Partner Type from the drop down list of options:
    a. CD-Conservation District
    b. AA-Agricultural Association
    c. WD-Water district with water delivery authority to agricultural producers
    d. FC-Farmer Cooperative

e. HE-Institution of Higher Education
f. FG-Federal Government
g. IT-Indian Tribe
h. LG-Local Government
i. MW-Municipal water or wastewater treatment entity
j. FP-For profit organization or entity
k. NP-Not-for-profit organization or entity
l. SG-State Government
m. CO-County Government

3. *Contribution Type* – Select Yes or No from the dropdown menus to indicate the types of contributions the partner is providing
    a. Project Coordination
    b. Producer Technical Assistance
    c. Lead Outreach & Education
    d. Conduct Monitoring
    e. Funding for Conservation
    f. Funding for Administration Costs
    g. Other

4. *Partner Contact* – Provide Partner Contact Information including
    a. First and Last Name
    b. Email
    c. Phone
    d. Address, City, State, Zip

5. *Contribution Amount* – See the Announcement for Program Funding for a description of Financial Assistance (FA), Technical Assistance (TA), and Administration Cost.
   Note: Placing your cursor into the blank field (e.g. FA Contributed) will create a pop-up definition of the term, indicated by the blue arrows.

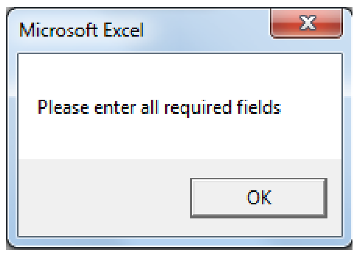
    a. *FA Contributed* – Click and type an amount for Financial Assistance contribution from the identified partner for the agreement.
    b. *TA Contributed* – Click and type an amount for Technical Assistance contribution from the identified partner for the agreement.
    c. Administration Cost – Enter the administration costs from the identified partner for the agreement.
    d. *Total Contributed* – This will automatically total the FA and TA Contributed

6. *Click the Add Partner button* – Once you have complete contribution information, click the “Add Partner” button, indicated with the purple arrow. The tool will transfer the upper portion information into the summary portion, clearing the boxes in the upper portion. You can now add contributions for additional partners to the tool.

a. If you realize you made a mistake after you click add partner, you can click the “Remove Last” button (indicated with a green arrow) and the tool will delete the last entry.
b. If you realize none of the information you entered is correct, you can click the “Clear All” button (indicated with a green arrow) and the tool will delete all entries.

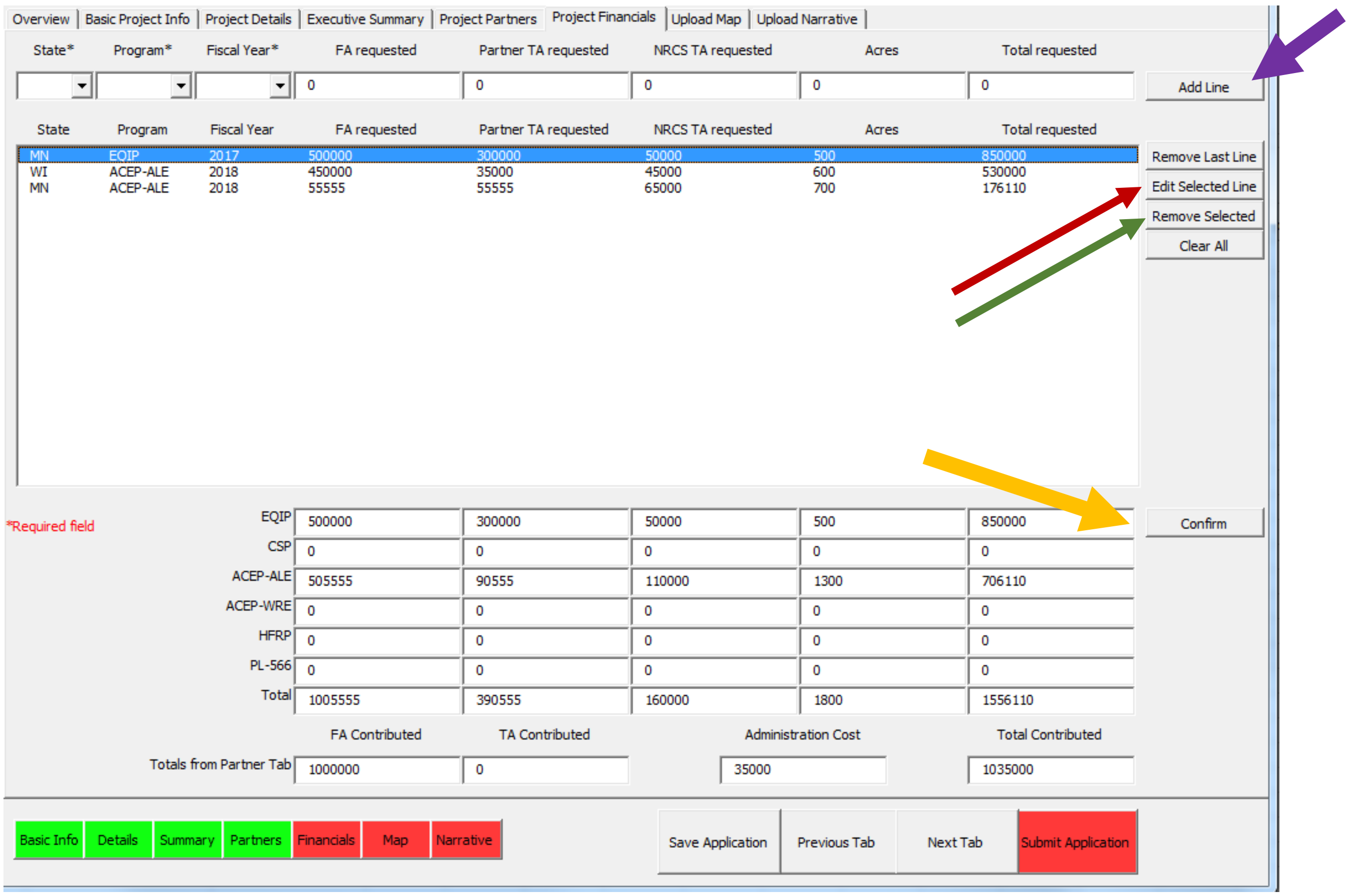
7. *Enter all partner contribution information* – Repeat step 1 through step 6 until you have entered all partner contributions into the tool.

8. *Click the Confirm button* (indicated with the orange arrow) –
   c. If you have completed all the required fields, the tool will advance to the next tab “Project Financials.” Be sure you click “Add Partner” for the last partner information entered.
   d. If you have not completed all the required components, the tool will generate this error:



Project Financials

Use this tab to provide information on the request for NRCS funds including the states involved, NRCS programs included, fiscal years, amount and type of funding, partner contributions, and acres.



This screen is split into two components.

The top portion is used for entering data about the agreement's funding request, while the bottom portion summarizes the data entered. You cannot change the numbers in the summary. You can either delete the incorrect information using "Remove Last Line" or "Clear All", then enter the correct information; or, you can "Edit a Selected Line".

For the top portion:

1. *State* – Use the drop down menu to select the state where the funding will be used.

2. *Program* – Use the drop down to select the NRCS program under which the agreement will implement conservation practices or other conservation work.

3. *Fiscal Year* – Use the drop down to select the fiscal year

4. *FA Requested* – Enter the amount of Financial Assistance requested under the program for the year in the state. See the Announcement for Program Funding for a description of Financial Assistance (FA). Note: Placing your cursor into the blank field will create a pop-up definition of the term.

5. *Partner TA Requested* – Enter the amount of Technical Assistance requested under the program for the year in the state. See the Announcement for Program Funding for a description of Technical Assistance (TA). Note: Placing your cursor into the blank field will create a pop-up definition of the term.

6. *NRCS TA Requested* – Enter the amount of Technical Assistance requested under the program for the year in the state. See the Announcement for Program Funding for a description of Technical Assistance (TA). Note: Placing your cursor into the blank field will create a pop-up definition of the term.

7. *Acres* – Enter the estimated amount of acres that the financial assistance will affect. Note: Placing your cursor into the blank field will create a pop-up definition of the term.

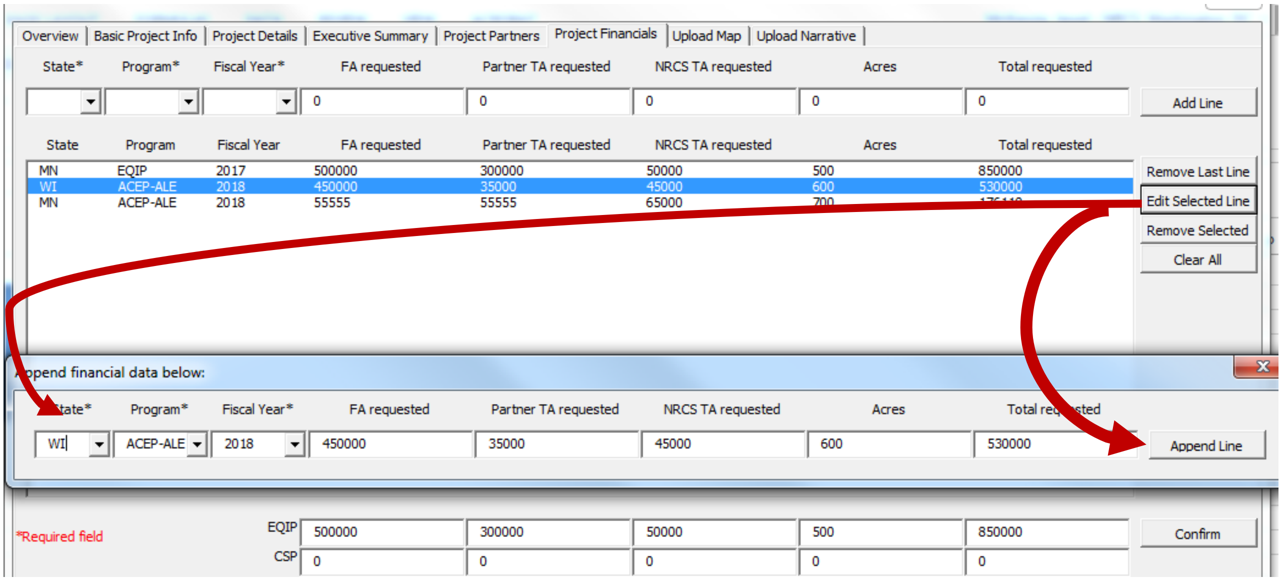
8. *Total Requested* – This box will automatically fill with the total from the FA Requested and TA Requested box.

9. *FA Contributed* – This box will automatically fill with the totals from the project partner tab.

10. *TA Contributed* – This box will automatically fill with the totals from the project partner tab.

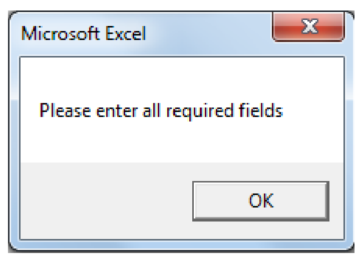
11. *Administration Cost* – This box will automatically fill with the totals from the project partner tab.

12. *Click the Add Line button* - Once you have complete contribution information, click the "Add Line" button, indicated with the purple arrow. The tool will transfer the upper portion information into the summary portion, clearing the boxes in the upper portion. You can now add contributions for additional partners to the tool.
    a. If you realize you made a mistake after you click add partner, you can do one of the following (screenshot follows):
        1) Click the "Remove Last Line" button (indicated with a green arrow) and the tool will delete the last entry.
        2) Highlight the line of data and click "Edit Selected Line", indicated by the red arrow. Make the correction(s) in the white field, and click "Append Line".
    b. If you realize none of the information you entered is correct, you can click the "Clear All" button (indicated with a green arrow) and the tool will delete all entries.



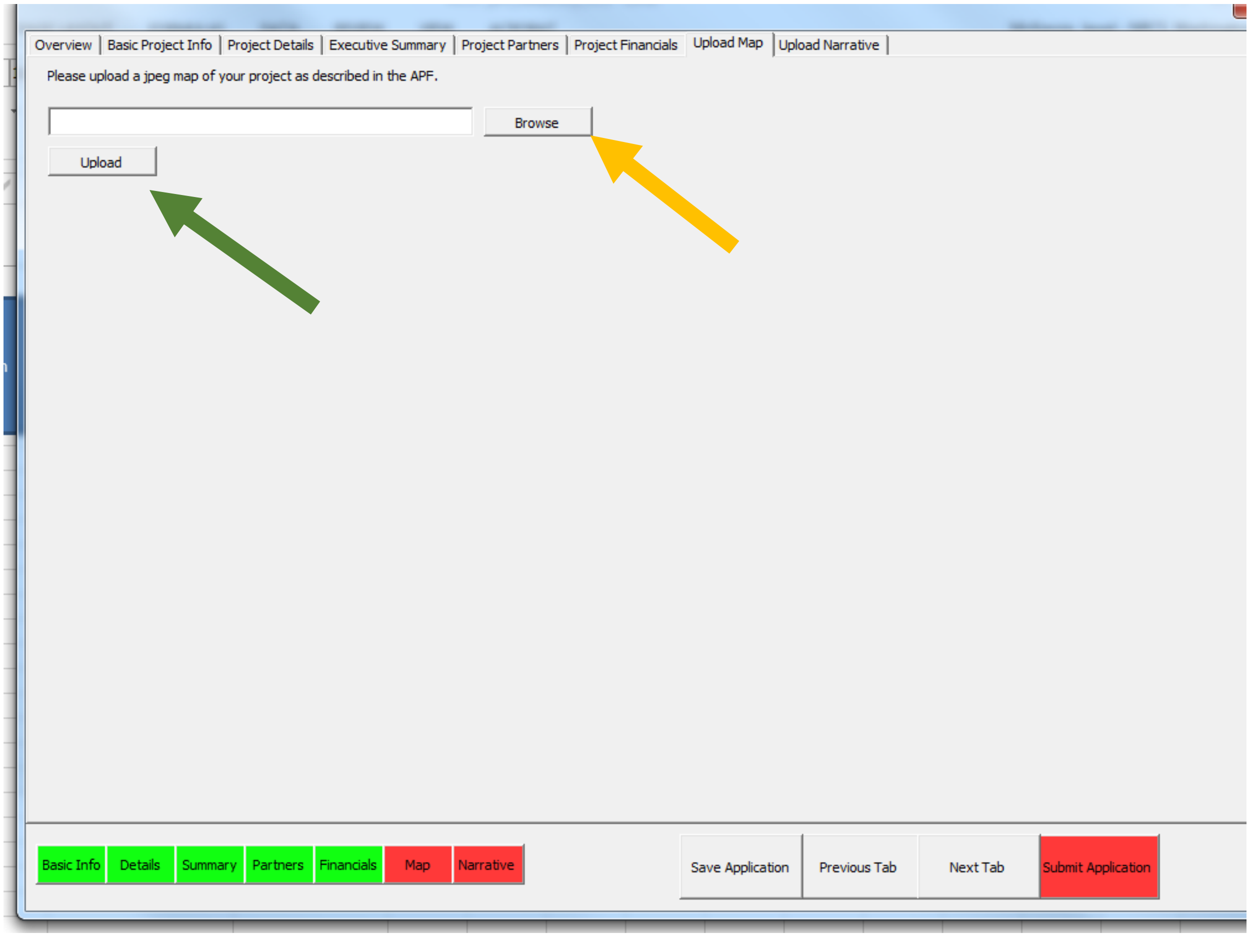
13. *Enter all requests for NRCS funding as well as associated partner contributed* – Repeat step 1 through step 10 until you have entered all the information into the tool.

14. *Click the Confirm button* (indicated with the orange arrow) –
    a. If you have completed all the required fields, the tool will advance to the next tab "Upload Map." Be sure you click "Add Line" for the last line of information entered.
    b. If you have not completed all the required components, the tool will generate this error:

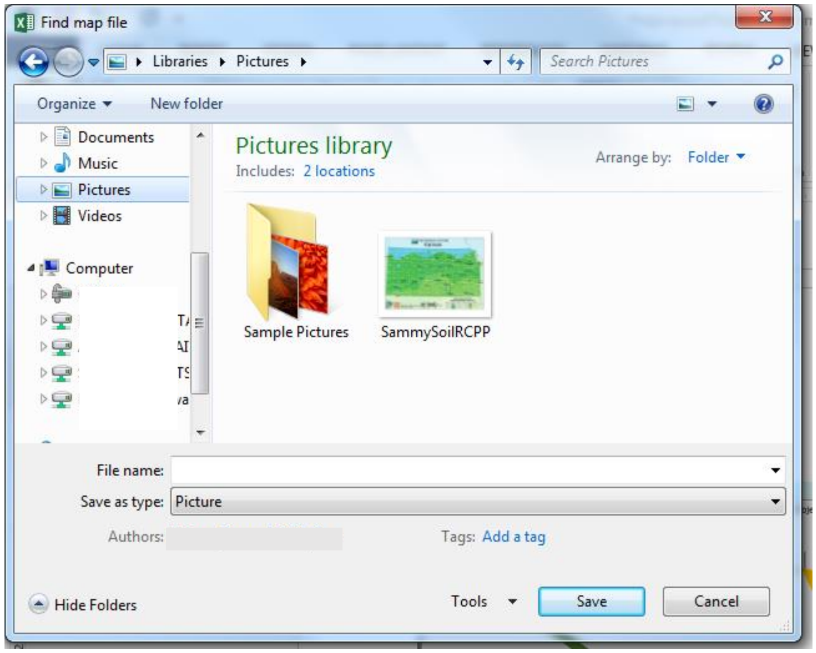


Upload Map

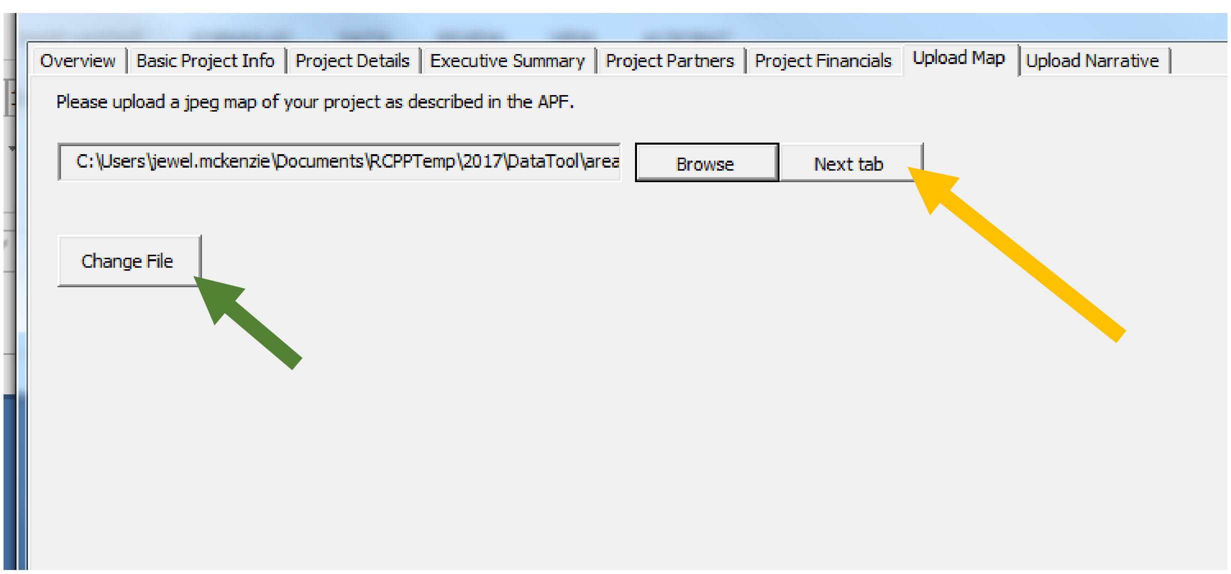
Use this tab to upload a map of the project area.



1. Click on the "Browse" button in the "Overview" tab (indicated with the yellow arrow). This window will open.



2. Navigate to the location you saved the map of the project location as a jpeg file. The tool restricts the file type to pictures.
3. Click on the map file. The name appears in the "File Name" line at the bottom of the window.
4. Click on the "Save" button.
5. The tool will automatically upload the map. You may not see a preview of the uploaded file. Continue working through the tool.
6. Please note after uploading files a "Change File" button will appear. You can select that button at any time when a file needs to be removed or changed.
7. Click on "Next Tab" to advance to the next tab.



Completing the fillable PDF for the narratives

One required component of the preproposal application is the fillable PDF for narrative elements for the preproposal application**.** Follow these steps to complete the fillable PDF.

1. Open the PDF.

2. Enter the Project Name in the first box on the first page.

3. Select the appropriate funding pool from the dropdown menu.

4. Select the lead state from the dropdown menu.

5. Click in the box under the ten narrative elements. You can either type directly or paste in text. The PDF limits the response to 4700 characters for each element. The elements are listed below as well as in the Fiscal Year 2018 Announcement for Program Funding.

    1. Briefly describe your RCPP team. Include a description of each partner's expertise and experience implementing similar projects. If partners are providing cash and/or in-kind services, "Letters of Financial Contribution" will be required in the Full-proposal application phase.

    2. Specify the geographic focus of the project area. Provide background for why and how the project area was selected. (Note that the project area does not need to be contiguous, but all areas should have a common primary resource concern that the project addresses.) In the description, discuss any areas that will be specifically targeted within the project area and explain why those areas are to be prioritized.

    3. Describe the natural resource concern(s) of the project area. Include how the resource concerns were identified through watershed plans, scientific literature, etc. See the listing of priority resource concerns in Section II.B. A complete list of NRCS approved natural resource concerns may be found on the RCPP Web site at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/rcpp/

    4. Project Scope: Describe the role of each partner during the project preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. Identify the NRCS conservation programs to be used (EQIP, CStP, ACEP, etc.) and conservation systems selected to address the resource concern(s) in the geographical focal area (conservation practices, activities, enhancements, restoration work, easement acquisition, and other partner approaches). Provide a brief description of the sequence of practice implementation or timeline.

    5. Describe any activities that have already taken place that support the proposed project. Characterize the existing infrastructure and capacity of partner(s) that provide a solid foundation from management of the proposed project. Consider future partnership resource needs and describe any other steps that are needed to ensure project success, such as hiring, coordination, outreach, training, etc.

6. Describe how project outcomes will be evaluated. This may include monitoring, modeling, measurements, and/or photo points, etc. Specify how the partners will collect data and report progress that demonstrates project objectives have been met or exceeded.

7. If applicable, indicate how the project will "assist producers in meeting or avoiding the need for natural resource regulatory requirements." Section 1271B (d) (4)(A) of the 1985 Act.

Reminder: The Pillar and Criteria descriptions offer insight into how proposal scoring takes place during the review phase.

8. Use this space to provide additional information about the project that has not been requested. Only include information and/or examples that will provide a greater understanding of your proposal.

Additional information

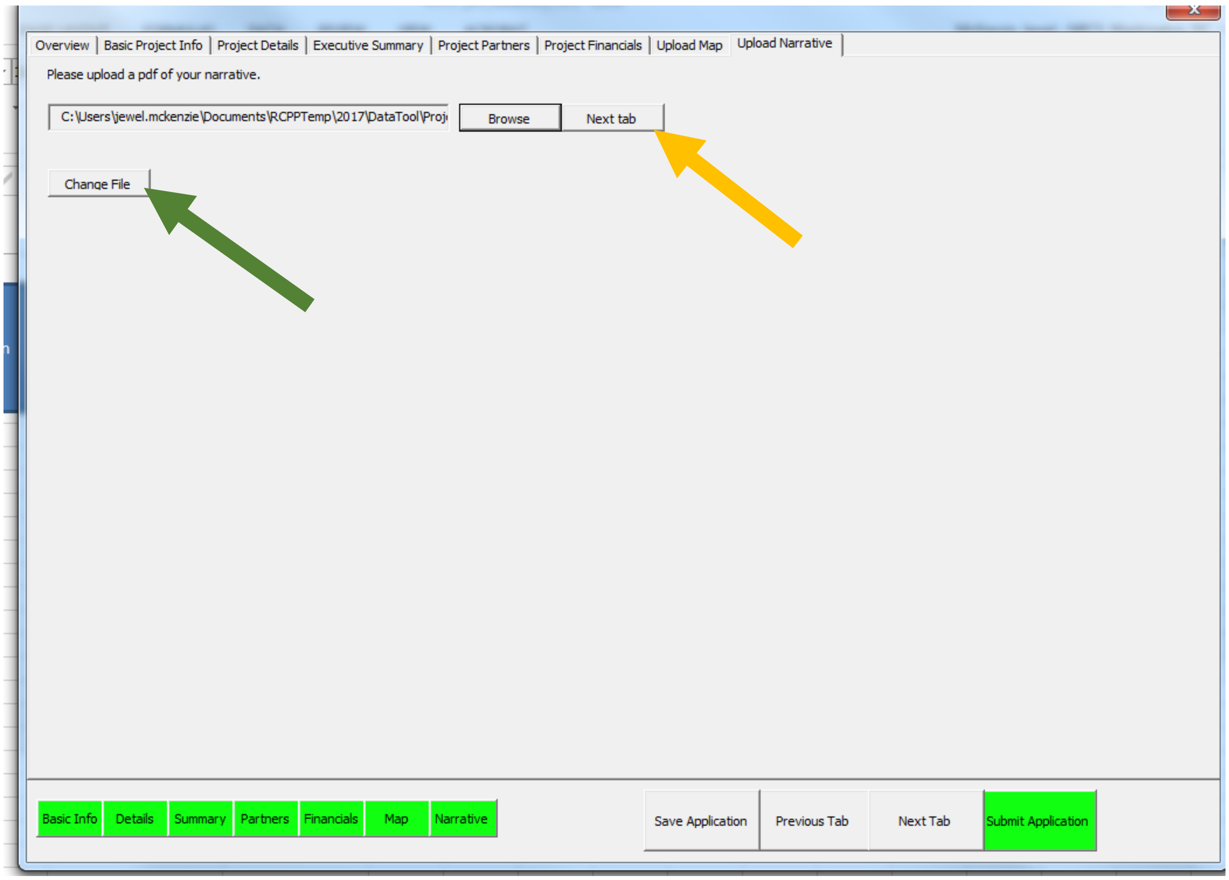
9. Partners are strongly encouraged to work with NRCS to fully understand program purpose and limitations. If **Adjustment of Terms** are needed in order to achieve project objectives, please describe here. Refer to Appendix A in the APF for Definitions.

10. Does the project require **Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA)**? If the project requires AFA, please describe how it will meet the goals and objectives of RCPP. Refer to Section III, Part C. for AFA eligibility and requirements and Appendix A in the APF for Definitions.

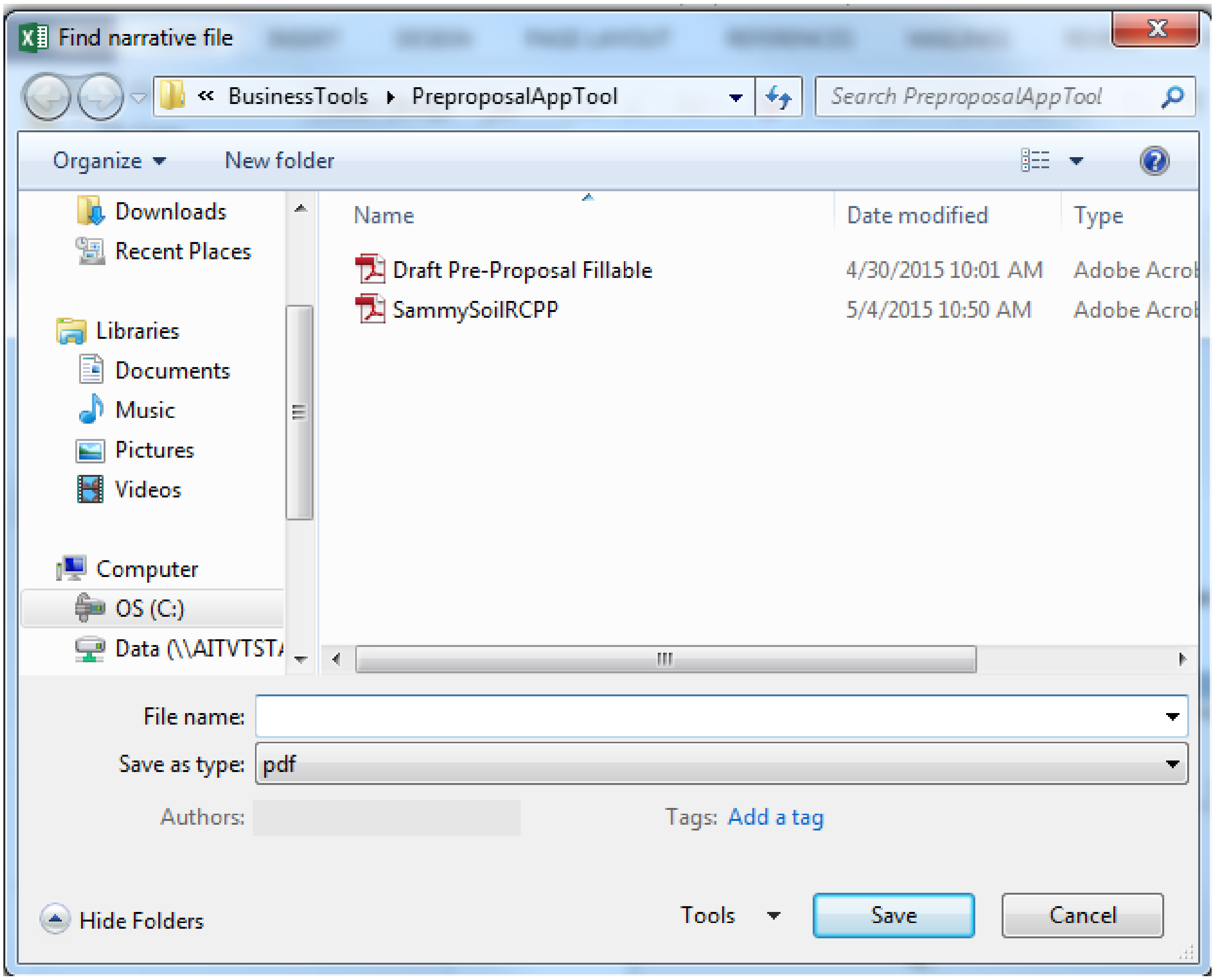
6. **Save the PDF before closing**.

Upload Narrative

Use this tab to upload the fillable PDF for the narrative responses for the Announcement for Program Funding.



1. Click on the "Browse" button in the "Overview" tab (indicated with the yellow arrow). This window will open.



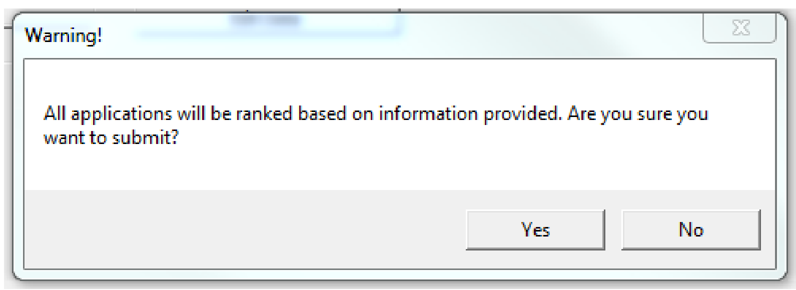
2. Navigate to the location you saved the fillable narrative. The tool restricts the file type to PDF.
3. Click on the fillable narrative file. The file name will appear in the "File Name" line at the bottom of the window.
4. Click on the "Save" button.
5. The tool will automatically upload the fillable PDF for the narratives to the tool.
    a. If you have completed all the tabs, the indicators at the bottom of the screen will all be green and the "Submit Application" button will be green.
    b. If you have not completed all the tabs, the indicators at the bottom of the screen will be red for the incomplete tabs. Navigate to the incomplete tab, complete the information and press the "Submit" button within the tab. The "Submit Application" button at the bottom right of the window should turn green.

Submit Application

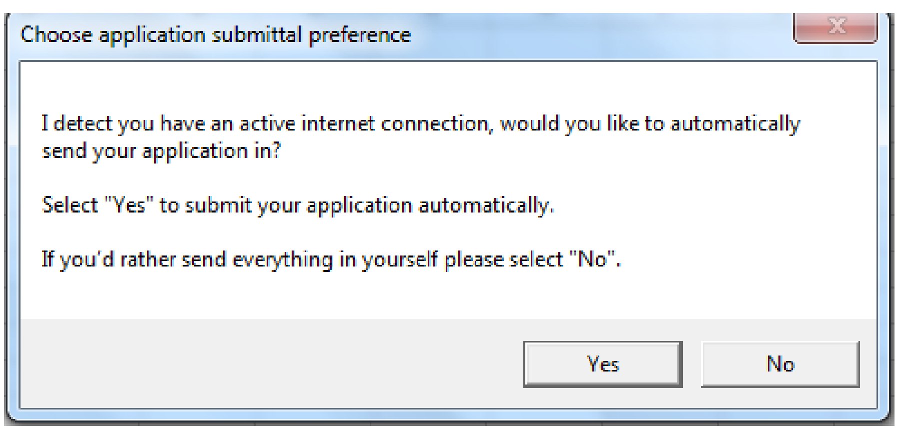
After you have completed the pre-proposal application tool so that all the indicators at the bottom of the window are green and you are ready to submit the application. The tool can email the application to the RCPP team if you use Microsoft Outlook or generate a file for you to manually attach to an email to the RCPP team.

1. Click the green "Submit Application" button at the bottom right of the screen (indicated with yellow arrow).

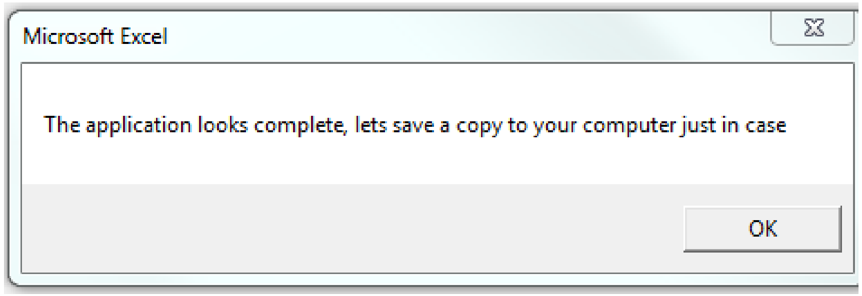
2. The tool will show this window. Click "Yes" to indicate that you are ready to continue.



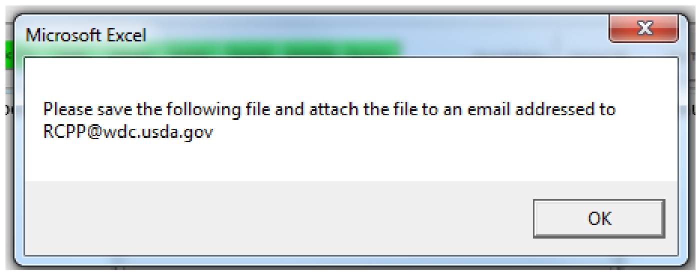
3. The tool will show this window. Click "Yes" to indicate that you would like to send using Microsoft Outlook, which the tool will use to create an email. Click "No" if you would like to submit the application with another email client.



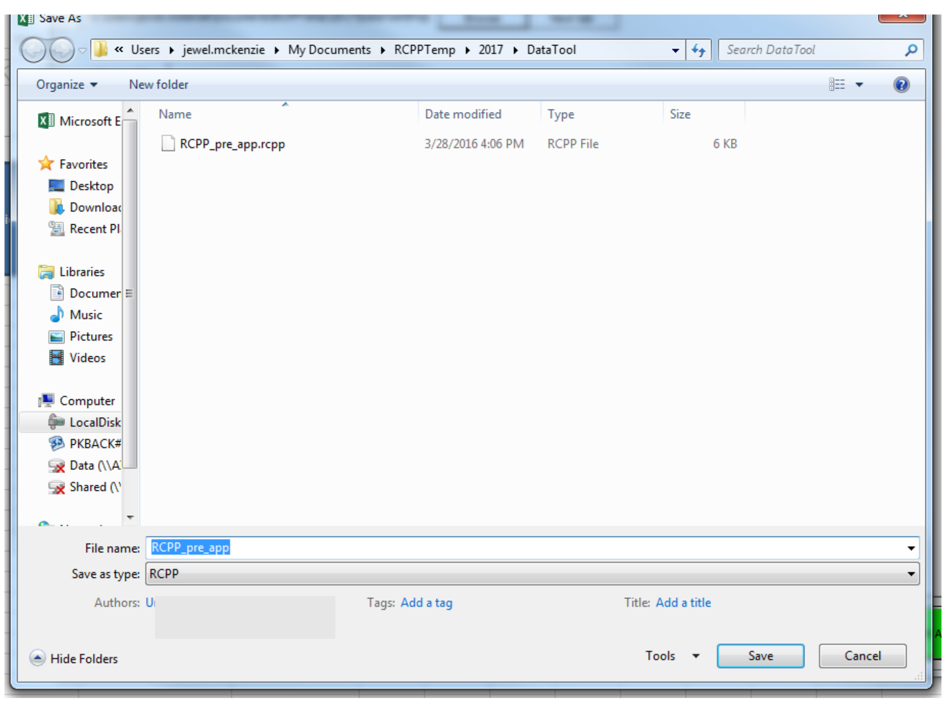
- If you click "Yes," the tool will generate this message.



- If you click “No,” the tool will generate this message.



4. If you click “Yes”, the tool will open a place to save your application file.

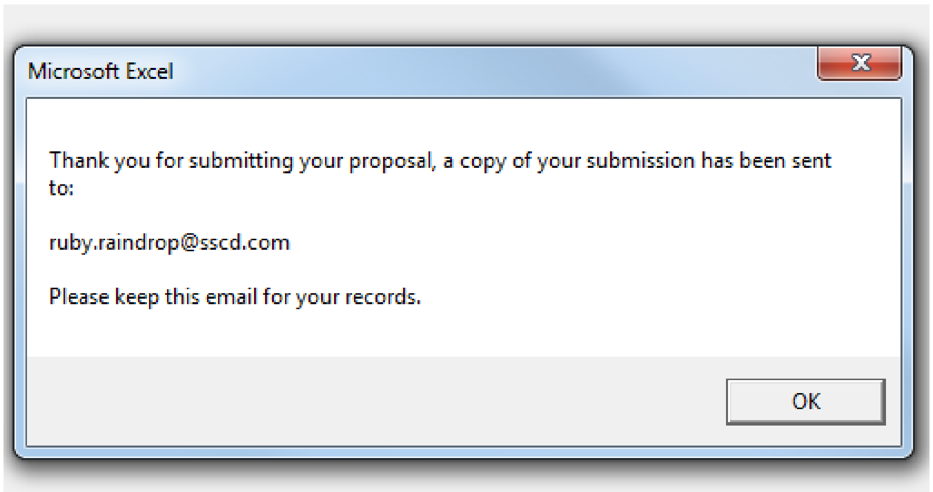


a. Navigate to the location you want to **save the file**.

b. **Leave the "File Name" line at the bottom of the newly opened window as the default "RCPP_app."**

c. Click the "Save" button.

d. You should see a pop-up message confirming that your submission has been sent to the applicant's email.



e. **Check your email to verify that your application has been submitted.**

f. Send an email to RCPP@wdc.usda.gov with the subject "New RCPP application" with the following attachments to:

   1. Inform the RCPP Team that you have submitted a pre-proposal application

   2. Notify the team if you encounter application trouble. Please take screen shots and be as specific as you can to help the team trouble-shoot the issue.